

Mali's Tuareg want to be involve in settling crisis

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Mali's Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra addresses the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters in New York.

Mali's Tuareg separatist movement has asked the United Nations to involve them in settling the crisis in the north of the country, saying otherwise there was no chance of "a definitive solution".

"Without the frank and direct involvement of the National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA), it is illusory to hope for a definitive solution and lasting peace" in Islamist-occupied northern Mali, the MNLA's representative in Europe, Mossa Ag Attaher, wrote Wednesday in a letter to UN chief Ban Ki-moon.

The letter called for the "wiping out of the Islamo-narco-terrorist plague in the Sahel region (of west Africa) and the Azawad (northern Mali)," and was timed to coincide with a UN debate on the option of sending international troops to end an Islamist occupation of half the country.

The MNLA is "the only objective, credible and unavoidable ally in the struggle against the dark forces implanted in the Azawad," said Ag Attaher, stating that he was writing on behalf of the Transitional Council of the Azawad, his movement's provisional government.

While expressing regret at "distrust towards the MNLA" from the international community, Ag Attaher ruled out any "unnatural alliance" with the Islamist groups, which had nevertheless been envisaged Monday by another member of the transitional council, failing an accord with the Bamako government.

Mali's Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra on Wednesday officially asked the UN Security Council to agree to "an international military force, one which would be composed of all those willing and able to help us reconquer occupied territories in the north of our country."

Other west African countries and France have made calls for the creation of an African-led force to help Mali flush out the Islamists from the northern territory seized after a March coup created chaos in Bamako.

The ethnic group Tuaregs were among the forces that took over northern Mali, but they were soon sidelined by the Islamists. – AFP

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